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ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 HA-05 SR-05 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 AID-05 SP-02 EB-08 /071 W
-----115361 182154Z /75

R 181928Z APR 79
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 281
INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPs
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
() Release (X) Excise () Deny

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Declassify: (X) In Part () In Full
(X) Classify as S () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date 4/25/01 Declassify on Reason 25X

SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3056

E.O. 12065: GDS 4/18/85 (HALLMAN, WILLIAM H.) OR-P
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJ: [REDACTED] CLANDESTINE PRISONERS: A SPECIAL ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY RESOURCES WERE TRAINED TWO WEEKS
AGO ON ASSEMBLING AVAILABLE DATA ON "CLANDESTINE PRISONERS."
THE SUBJECT REMAINS OBSCURE, BUT CONSENSUS WAS THAT IF
SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS EXIST THEY ARE "PIPELINE PRISONERS"
-- PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED AND INTERROGATED BUT
FOR WHOM NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE WHETHER THEY ARE TO
BE KILLED OR IN SOME WAY "SURFACED," FOR EXAMPLE UNDER
PEN. THERE ARE OTHER CATEGORIES OF "CLANDESTINE PRISONERS"
WHOSE NAMES ARE NOT PUBLISHED BUT WHOSE WHEREABOUTS IN
MANY CASES ARE KNOWN BY FAMILIES. TRUSTIES AND RETRAINEES
ARE IN THIS CATEGORY. WE STILL BELIEVE THAT THESE PERSONS
NUMBER IN THE HUNDREDS, RATHER THAN THE THOUSANDS. WE
BELIEVE IT BEST TO DEFER THIS ISSUE AS ONE TO BE
DEALT WITH NEXT BY THE IACHR, BUT WILL MEANWHILE
COLLECT FURTHER DATA BEST WE CAN. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY RESOURCES HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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THE PAST TWO WEEKS TOWARD COMPILING AS MUCH DATA
AS POSSIBLE ON THE SUBJECT OF CLANDESTINE PRISONERS

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-- WHETHER THEY EXIST AND IF SO IN WHAT NUMBERS
AND IN WHAT CATEGORIES OF CLANDESTINITY AND
DETENTION. (SEE BUENOS AIRES 2501.)

3. [REDACTED] CONFLICTING ASSERTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE:
GENERAL VIOLA VERY RECENTLY (SEE BUENOS AIRES 2490)
TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THE ARMED FORCES ARE HOLDING NO
CLANDESTINE PRISONERS. HIS ASSERTION HAS BEEN
REPEATED BY PERSONS IN AUTHORITY AT OTHER LEVELS.
YET THERE ARE PERSISTENT REPORTS BY PERSONS RELEASED
FROM DETENTION THAT THEY HAVE BEEN HELD WITH LARGE
NUMBERS OF CLANDESTINE -- I.E. UNPUBLICIZED, WHERE-
ABOUTS UNKNOWN TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY ETC. -- PRISONERS.
THERE HAVE BEEN ALLUSIONS EVEN BY LOW RANKING SECURITY
AUTHORITIES TO PLACES OF SECRET CONFINEMENT.

4. [REDACTED] FOLLOWING ARE SOME CONCLUSIONS THAT RESULTED
FROM DATA ASSEMBLED AND SHARED AT A MEETING APRIL 9 ATTENDED
BY THE DCM, ALL MEMBERS OF THE POL SECTION, [REDACTED]
THE DAO, MILGROUP, USICA AND
PATRICK FLOOD FROM HA IN THE DEPARTMENT:

B1

A. [REDACTED] THERE COULD BE -- AND PROBABLY ARE -- SEVERAL
SUBCATEGORIES OF "CLANDESTINE PRISONER" WHICH SHOULD
BE ISOLATED FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS: 1) "IN PROCESS"
PRISONERS -- PERSONS THAT IS WHO HAVE BEEN ABDUCTED
OR POSSIBLY ARRESTED AND TAKEN INTO INTERROGATION CENTERS
AND NEITHER ACKNOWLEDGED NOR RELEASED; 2) TRUSTIES
AND PERSONS CLOSELY COOPERATING WITH AUTHORITIES,
WHOSE WHEREABOUTS MAY BE KNOWN TO FAMILIES BUT WHOSE
NAMES ARE NOT PUBLISHED (TO PROTECT THE INDIVIDUAL)
AND PROBABLY FIGURE AMONG THE "DISAPPEARED" ON LISTS
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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ASSEMBLED BY HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS; 3) PERSONS IN
"RETRAINING CENTERS" OF THE KIND DESCRIBED HERE IN
THE PRESS A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO -- AGAIN IN MANY
INSTANCES WHEREABOUTS ARE KNOWN TO FAMILIES BUT ARE
NOT PUBLISHED OR OTHERWISE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED;
4) PERSONS UNDER "DISPOSICION DE AUTORIDADES MILITARES"
-- THE "DAM'S" -- INCLUDED WITHIN AN "OVERT" CONTINGENT
VISITED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND KNOWN BY
THEIR FAMILIES TO BE KEPT AT A PARTICULAR PRISON (BUT
WHOSE NAMES ARE NOT PUBLISHED) AND 5) POSSIBLY, REPEAT
POSSIBLY, SOME WITHIN A "COVERT" STATUS WHICH WE HAVE ONLY
HINTS OF AND CAN OTHERWISE MERELY POSTULATE. (NOTE: WE CONTINUE

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TO BELIEVE THE "DAM" CATEGORY IS IN USE, ALTHOUGH
GENERAL VIOLA -- SEE BUENOS AIRES 2828 -- DISCLAIMED
THIS. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN DUE TO SOME TERMINOLOGICAL
DIFFERENCE.) FINALLY THERE MAY BE CLANDESTINE PRISONERS
"CATEGORY 6" -- BUT WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF THIS -- WHO
FALL OUTSIDE ALL THE ABOVE CATEGORIES.

B. (:) WE LACK DATA TO SET A NUMBER OR AN OVERALL
NUMBER OR A NUMBER BY CATEGORIES, BUT CONSENSUS IS
THAT SEVERAL HUNDRED PERSONS CLANDESTINELY HELD MAY BE INVOLVED
WHILE SEVERAL THOUSAND PROBABLY ARE NOT. PROBABLY IN TERMS
OF NUMBERS AND IMPORTANCE THE SIGNIFICANT CATEGORY
IS THE FIRST ABOVE -- I.E. PERSONS "IN PROCESS." EVEN
THE "CLANDESTINITY" OF OTHER CATEGORIES IS NOT COMPLETE,
SINCE THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT NUMBERS OF FAMILIES ARE
INFORMED OF WHEREABOUTS ALTHOUGH LISTS ARE NOT MAKE
PUBLIC.

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C. [REDACTED] OUR SUSPICIONS REGARDING PEOPLE KEPT CLAN-
DESTINELY "IN PROCESS" FOR EXTENDED PERIODS COMES
FROM OFTEN REPORTED CASES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE SURFACED
FOUR TO SIX MONTHS OR EVEN LONGER AFTER HAVING BEEN
ABDUCTED, ALTHOUGH THERE IS EVIDENCE TOO THAT ONCE
ABDUCTED AN INDIVIDUAL'S CHANCES OF BEING SURFACED
DIMINISH INCREASINGLY QUICKLY WITH PASSAGE OF TIME.
THE SUSPICIONS COME TOO FROM THE INEPTITUDE AND
INDECISIVENESS WITH WHICH MUCH OF

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THE PROCESS IS HANDLED. FACED WITH A CHOICE OF "SURFACING" A DUBIOUS PRISONER ON A PEN LIST OR MURDERING HIM OUTRIGHT WE SPECULATE THAT BUREAUCRATIC INTETIA TAKES OVER. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, EFFORTS FROM LEADERSHIP TO "FLOAT PRISONERS UPWARDS" HAS DIMINISHED CHANCES THAT LOW LEVEL COMMANDERS RETAIN THEIR CACHE OF PRISONERS -- BUT THAT DOES NOT DISPEL THE POSSIBILITY THAT RELATIVELY LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE MAY BE TRAPPED AT INTERROGATION CENTERS.

D. [REDACTED] WE BELIEVE THAT SECURITY PROCEDURES WHICH PERMIT ROUTINE LIQUIDATION OF PRISONERS, BALANCED AGAINST THE PROBLEMS AND INCONVENIENCES OF KEEPING [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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PRISONERS ARGUES FOR THEIR BEING SMALL NUMBERS OF PERSONS HELD CLANDESTINELY RATHER THAN LARGE NUMBERS.

5. [REDACTED] POLICY IMPLICATIONS. LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE PERHAPS GREATER INCLINATION THAN DOES THE EMBASSY TO ESTIMATE HIGH NUMBERS OF CLANDESTINE PRISONERS, HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO JOIN THE ISSUE HEAD-ON WITH THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT OUT OF FEAR THAT CLANDESTINE PRISONERS WILL BE KILLED BECAUSE OF THESE EFFORTS. SOME EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT IN THE PAST PRISONERS HAVE BEEN KILLED AS A RESULT OF INQUIRIES ONCE THEIR (CLANDESTINE) WHEREABOUTS WAS SUSPECTED. ONE SEASONED FOREIGN OBSERVER SPECULATES THAT EXECUTIONS MAY BE TAKING PLACE NOW IN A SCRAMBLE TO "HAVE THINGS CLEANED UP" BEFORE THE VISIT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. AT THE EMBASSY WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THIS.

6. [REDACTED] WE HAVE RECEIVED A NUMBER OF REPORTS THAT THE GOA IS MAKING MANY CHANGES IN PRISONER TREATMENT AND STATUS IN ANTICIPATION OF THE IACHR VISIT. AS THE GOA INSISTS THE COMMISSION CAN VISIT ANY SITE IT WISHES, THIS SHOULD PUT HEAVY PRESSURE ON ANY UNITS WHICH MIGHT STILL BE HOLDING UNACKNOWLEDGED PRISONERS. THE BEST COURSE FOR DEALING WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF CLANDESTINE PRISONS IS TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE IACHR VISIT AND TO COLLECT ANY INFORMATION WHICH MIGHT ASSIST IT IN DEALING WITH THIS QUESTION.
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